1:Campbell E-5 (1954-1955)1964
EH14 Sarakatsani EH14
Zagori



a road which is often congested with the flocks of other stanis. In the dark and on ground he does not know the shepherd must try to graze his sheep where he can, prevent them from mixing with the animals of other flocks, and guard them from village or Sarakatsan thieves for whom the conditions are an opportunity and a temptation. At dawn they try to find some grass, and here the mule-train (καραβάνι) with the older men, women, and children, overtakes them to prepare a temporary milking-pen. After the animals have been milked the women at once begin to turn the milk into cheese, and later to bake bread. Meanwhile the shepherds graze the sheep until about 11 a.m. when the animals lie down to rest in the heat of the day. They are milked again in the evening before setting out on the next leg of their journey. But the women remain to make the cheese for the second time in the day, and to take a few hours of sleep before they move swiftly through the night to overtake the sheep once again. After a journey of perhaps ten days they finally reach their homeland, the high mountains of Zagori.

In the mountains shepherding practice changes. The sheep graze at night in the cool air when their appetite is stronger. At dawn the animals are watered and about 9 o'clock they are milked. They then 'sleep in the shade' (σταλίζουν) until the late afternoon when they are milked again before setting out to graze in the fresh evening air. About once in every eight days salt is spread on flat stones. They eat this greedily and are watered immediately afterwards, a treatment which increases their will to graze in the summer heat, and is believed to strengthen them for successful mating.

The quality of physical courage, on which the Sarakatsani put so much emphasis in their list of the ideal attributes of the shepherd, is perhaps more necessary in summer than winter. Moving along, or over, the broken limestone ridges in the darkness from one plateau of grass to another requires a very sure foot and steady nerves. Sheep sometimes get into difficulties and have to be rescued. If an animal falls into a crevasse and breaks a leg it must be extricated, the limb bound and splinted, and the animal carried down the mountain to the village.

Immediately before or after the migration to summer pastures, the animals are shorn. Already at the end of March some wool has been taken from their legs and haunches but the full

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233 shearing is delayed until the warmer weather. Shearing, too,
●236 marks the passing of the winter and is considered a festival.
461 On the final day there is meat, wine, and dancing. Like the journey from the plains it is also hard work for the shepherd, giving him, however, an opportunity to prove his expertise and strength. In a highly competitive atmosphere before the appraising eyes of each other and the women, the men of the stani gather in the sheep-fold to clip the fleeces of the different flocks. A strong and skilful man may shear sixty animals in a day.

233 The cycle of shepherding activities continues with the mating
461 season in June or July, the date depending on the condition of
[234] the animals. Then, in the last days of July, the cheese merchant closes his station and gradually with the reduced flow of milk from the pregnant ewes the shepherds milk their animals less frequently until, some time in the first half of August, lactation ceases. At length the shepherds pause and rest.

When the shepherds arrive in the mountains their mood changes almost abruptly from an expectation of the worst to guarded optimism. Since the autumn they have suffered anxiety, crisis, and frequently physical exhaustion in their efforts to avoid disaster to the lambs, a small milk yield, or disease. These dangers do not exist, or are less considerable, in
[578] the summer. At this season the systematic practice of reciprocal grass theft, the sometimes accidental trespass, the intermingling of two flocks when they converge on the cheese-maker's station at milking time, are all situations which may precipitate quarrels with unrelated shepherds that threaten life and honour, but they are not possibilities that cause the shepherd much apprehensive concern. In personal oppositions he is confident in his own strength and courage, he depends on nothing outside himself. On the other hand, whatever skill a shepherd may possess, the dangers which threaten the flock in winter often depend on factors or elements beyond his individual control.
[235] Yet extreme poverty, which is a possible consequence of such a disaster, destroys honour and sometimes takes the lives of small children.

233 The Sarakatsan shepherd identifies himself with his animals.
825 Their condition is almost as personal a concern as his own
[577] health and appearance. If a sheep is stoned by another man, the shepherd's honour is touched.

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A man may occarionally give his wife a kid 432
to sell but otherwise chickens and eggs are her only source of 434
cash income.

The huts which protect the Sarakatsani from the weather and 342
the curiosity of other families, are of two principal kinds, circu- 462
lar and domed (τουρλωτά), or rectangular and 'arched' (ἁψιδωτά). Except that in the case of rectangular huts the men help the women to erect the posts and crossbeams the building of the hut is entirely the work of women. They cut, select, and tie into position the pliable but strong branches which form the framework of the circular hut. They collect, dress, and tie on to the wooden skeleton the bundles of reeds, grasses, or ferns with which the hut is thatched. They level the floor inside and plas- 237
ter both the floor and the walls to a height of three feet with a mixture of mud and mule-dung. They form the central hearth. Five or six women working continuously are able to erect a hut 461
of conventional size[4] in two to three days, although it will have 426
taken them at least as many days to find and prepare their materials.

The treatment of the wool from which the Sarakatsani make 236
the greater part of their clothing and all their blankets is also, 462
naturally, in the hands of the women. The wool is divided into three categories according to the fineness and length of the staple. It is washed in hot water and beaten with a wooden implement to free it from surplus grease. After the wool has 283
been dried in the sun and disentangled with a carding tool 236
(λανάρι) it is spun by hand from a distaff (ρόκα). This is a lengthy process and when a woman's hands are not otherwise employed she is either spinning or knitting. Finally, the spun 286
thread is woven into cloth on the simple wooden loom which the 221
women operate continuously during the months of August and September when the flocks and the shepherds make fewer demands on their energies. On the loom are made the blankets, the shepherd's capes woven from a mixture of wool and goats' hair, and the cloth for jackets, skirts, and trousers. Today pro- 294
fessional village or town tailors cut and sew the suits of the men, but the cloth remains their own. Only shoes, shirts, and cotton 291
material (for the young girls' dresses at the summer festivals) are 432
bought from the shops of Jannina and other towns.

[4] A circular hut for a family of 6 or 7 adults generally has a diameter of 14 or 15 feet. Height and diameter are approximately the same.

1:Campbell E-5 (1954-1955)1964
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sustaining a burden of debt and advance payments of perhaps £20,000 he makes an annual net profit on the spring milk alone of about £8,000.

The Sarakatsan financial year (see Appendix III) begins and ends in August, when the shepherd takes the advance for his winter milk, which represents between one-third and one-half of the value of the estimated winter yield of milk. A man with 200 ewes would receive about £100. With some of this money he is able to complete his payments for summer grazing. This he is normally bound to do before the police will allow him to move his sheep towards the plains in the autumn. He hopes to leave the Zagori village in October with perhaps one-third of this advance still in his pocket to tide his family over their general living expenses in the early winter months. During the winter months there is a constant struggle between the shepherd and the merchant for further loans. The original advance is generally almost exhausted by Christmas, especially if cotton-cake has been bought to supplement the diet of the pregnant ewes. The merchant tries to stave off further requests for additional advances since he does not want to carry an unnecessary weight of debt beyond the amount that is necessary to hold the shepherd as a client. He keeps the shepherd physically alive by granting him credit in the form of flour. In this way he checks luxury spending by the shepherd at his expense and makes, on paper at least, a small profit for himself by selling on credit flour of questionable quality at a slightly inflated price. The shepherd and his family exist as best they can, running up small debts with the shopkeepers in the winter villages and towns who themselves compete for his trade by offering credit which they hope will make him a permanent customer. Eventually some crisis occurs. He must have money to engage a lawyer in a court case, or money to pay a doctor or to bribe an official. He goes to the cheese merchant and explains the situation. The latter, if he is astute, knows the critical moment when he must slacken the reins; a further *ad hoc* advance is given.

Some weeks before Easter the financial outlook may improve. There may be fifty or more male lambs to sell at about thirty shillings each. Later, after Easter, the sheep are shorn and, if there are no daughters for whose dowry blankets and cloth must be woven, some wool will be sold. A shepherd tries to keep

[see category 116, pp. 363-364 -- Analyst]

/40 cont./

286 This instrument is used for the most important of the operations preliminary to weaving, namely the warping, and its function is to prevent the thread from tangling when one prepares the warp of the loom.

In this connection it is perhaps necessary to mention that to mount the warp they use five pegs. However, the latter do not have any special interest from the point of view of "construction."

236 There is the carding tool, which serve to comb out the strands of wool after washing. It consists of two rectangular boards each of which has, /41/ on one of its sides, a certain number of metal needles (points), while on the free surface one sees, respectively, on one of the boards a handle and, on the other, a rope 60 centimeters

Fig. 28

Fig. 29

long which ends in a wooden cylinder to which it is attached. Drawing No. 29 shows both this instrument and how it is used. (see also fig. 28).

/45 cont./

233

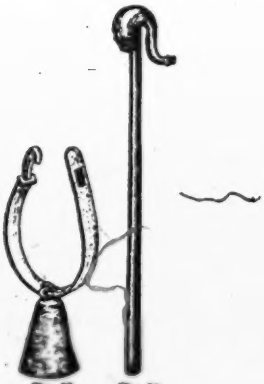

Fig. 33 Fig. 34

The second /object/ consists of a very long shaft (approximately two meters) ending in a very curved handle. The latter serves to catch by a hind leg the animals that try to move away from the flock. The curve of the handle is calculated in such a way that a foot goes through it easily but with a tight fit. Thus this curve varies according to the kind of animal. It is wider for goats and narrower for ewes. The Sarakatsani use the second joint of the thumb to measure it. It seems that the thickness of this joint corresponds to the size of the feet of the ewes (fig. 34).

[824] [804]

●236 /46/ Crafts dependent on wool.

[197] Wool is the raw material which the Sarakatsani use almost exclusively to make their clothing, their covers and rugs. Cotton has been introduced only recently among them in the form of thread which they buy commercially.

/46 cont./

236 In order that this account may come closer to reality, it follows the successive stages of this industry as they unfold.

Shearing

Fig. 35

Shearing is very hard work because the wool of the sheep as well as that of the goats is impregnated with grease, (wool grease), which makes penetration of the scissors extremely difficult. Obviously, [432] the scissors used (pivoted scissors) are bought commercially (fig. 35).

Shearing requires much skill and physical strength. It is done preferably on sunny but calm days, for humidity and wind harden the fatty matter that impregnates the fleece. It is, moreover, for the same reason that the animal to be sheared is always placed in the sun.

[221] The season of shearing coincides with arrival at the summer location, that is to say, after the spring move (at the beginning of the month of May).

[461] On the day chosen they set to work at dawn and continue all day. The women gather up the wool and put it in bags after sorting it by color.

If the flocks are numerous or if the meteorological conditions [527] are not favorable, the shearing may last several weeks. However, when

/46 cont./
236 [527] all is finished they organize a festival in order to rest and entertain themselves.

The arrangements observed are the same whether for sheep of goats. [221] [462] However, shearing of the latter precedes that of the former (it takes place during the month of March) and it is done by the women for reasons relating to special beliefs and superstitions. (9)

9. See below, pp. 101, 177-179, 370-371.

It is also necessary to mention another type of shearing which is partial and pertains only to the sheep. Twice a year (in March [22] [232] and in /47/ October) they shear the belly, the feet and chest to relieve the animals somewhat of their thick fleece (it is very warm at these times) and to rid them to some extent of their parasites.

Wool making

This type of work involves the following operations: boiling which consists of bringing the wool to boil in large cauldrons in order to get rid of the grease. The water from this boiling is saved in a receptacle and kept for later use.

Washing: once boiled, the wool is piled up at the edge of a brook or rushing stream. There, the women wash it very carefully in [412] running water and beat it with paddles of wood.

Drying: the washing finished, they dry the wool by exposing it to the sun.

Carding: it is then carded. They start by ridding the wool of all foreign bodies clinging to its strands, for example burrs, thorns, etc. After that they first disentangle the wool by hand in order to facilitate the cardage proper, which consists of combing the wool with the cards.

The position of the cards (fig. 28 and 29) is as follows: the lower thin board rests on the knees of the seated carder; this board has a rope around the center which passes between the knees of the carder; its end is attached to a wooden cylinder placed under

/47 cont./

236 her feet;. With her right hand the carder holds the upper board by its handle. Finally, with the left hand, she brings the tufts of wool between the toothed surfaces of the boards.

Sorting: it is done in the course of the carding. The longest strands are put aside as the carding proceeds and are reserved for the manufacture of the better fabrics, those which are used for making clothing. The short strands are for other uses.

(283) It is also during the carding that the wool is prepared in advance for spinning; each two or three cardfuls make a distaff-feel.

283 Spinning: the bunches are then placed on the /48/ distaff. Once this is loaded, the Sarakatsani woman starts to spin by using a spindle. (10)

10. The three stages of this operation among the Sarakatsani, as elsewhere, are: drawing out, twisting and winding on. See A. Leroi-Gourhan, L'homme et la matière, p. 259.

The handling of the spindle varies according to the quality of the yarn one wishes to obtain. If one wishes to prepare fine yarn for clothing, the spindle is suspended by the thread itself and turned freely in the air (fig. 26). A On the other hand, if the thread

A [See p. 49--Analyst]

/94 cont./

233 (the time when milking stops), milking takes place around noon, that
234 is to say, once a day. However, the intervals become progressively
221 more spread out, inasmuch as the production of milk decreases as the season advances; thus, toward the 15th of August milking is done only every two or three days.

236 /95/ As for shearing, everything relating to it has already been pointed out in connection with the wool crafts. Hence we shall not go back over it here.

262 Finally, we must emphasize that the meat is almost exclusively
439 a means of trade for the Sarakatsani, since they eat it only five

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Fig. 75

262 or six times a year. On very rare occasions they "sacrifice" a lamb.
[439] This is their own expression, and it is a sufficient indication of their attitude with regard to this act.

233 Likewise, they never kill female animals (except when these are
[262] sterile) because it is precisely on the female that their economy rests.
[432] The male lambs are the ones which, after 40 days, are gradually

596 /159 cont./
364 The meals, which the women take care of each in turn, are taken
[562] together, allowing for the inevitable separation by sex.

If the shepherds find themselves a relatively short distance from
[233] the camp, but nevertheless too far to be able to leave their flocks at mealtime, it is not unusual for a woman or a child to bring them their food.

596 The work then, which is performed jointly, follows the rule of
462 division of tasks according to sex, as shown in the following plan:

Work reserved exclusively for men: the wood craft, the preparation of skins, herding and transactions with the outside.

Work done by the women: the working of wool, the making of clothing building, gathering, the preparation of foods and of bread, lighting and fire.

This division of tasks is the general rule, a rule which naturally involves exceptions and subtle distinctions, chief of which are:

[825] The care and maintenance of goats is left to the women because goats
[233] "are possessed by the devil." Thus, the men must not touch them. They limit themselves with leading them to pasture. All the rest is incumbent on the women, inasmuch as the Sarakatsani believe that women are more competent than the men to enter into relations with unknown forces.

[231] The occasioned raising of pigs and poultry is likewise left to
[235] the women.

[36] We have seen that the leading and the protection of the flocks in
[22] the course of seasonal migrations is the business of the men. The
[484] women take care of the transportation of all belongings and the setting-up of the camp.

[236] The shearing of the sheep is work generally done by the men, although the help of the women is sometimes required. On the other hand, the shearing of goats is an exclusively female task.

[234] In milking, men and women cooperate without differentiation.

[313] The gathering of wood for making various objects is a task for men,
[322]

789 /263 cont./

585 the tree of immortality is the vine: M. Eliade: Ibid.,
[171] pp. 247 and 248, "the vine, the plant expression of
immortality--just as the vine in archaic traditions
has remained the symbol of youth and eternal life."
[293] say that this libation gives rise to "health, abundance and good fortune."
[182] Sometimes the bride also pours out water, in order to be always "fresh
[823] as water."

789 However, abundance is further sustained by the snake for the
825 polyvalent symbolism of the latter promotes abundance. Though explicit testimonies are lacking, the facts speak for themselves. It will be recalled that the Sarakatsani have extensive woodcrafts. On all the wooden
789 objects they make are found various decorative motifs, mostly geometric
825 and generally beautiful. Looking at them closely one immediately realizes
322 that the snake, or rather the viper, appears only on the staffs of the
53 shepherds or on the distaffs (fig. 104). A It is certain that the handle of
233 the staff, in the shape of a definite and marked curvature, in itself
283 suggests the movement of a snake. But the shape of the distaff calls to mind nothing similar. Moreover, nothing explains the absence of this motif on other objects. Now, it is obvious that the presence of the animal on the staff and the distaff is symbolic much more than it is ornamental. The snake accompanies these objects because they represent the two principal economic activities of the Sarakatsani, herding and wool crafts. If it is agreed that the chthonian forces favor fecundity and fertility, hence abundance, the viper will augment the yield from these two fundamental activities.

777 To complete our discussion of this subject we must still mention the Sarakatsani observances bearing on the propitious days for the performance
777 of certain tasks. Thus, the shearing must never begin on Tuesday. On the
236 other hand, it is altogether advisable to start the shearing on Maundy Thursday by symbolically removing a little wool from a sheep. Maundy

A, /See p. 429--Analyst/
A

/263 cont./

777 236 Thursday is moreover considered /264/ as a propitious day for a certain number of practices that will be dealt with in the chapter devoted to religion. (39)

39. Carsten Höeg, in the work cited, says about shearing (p. 14-15): "I have sought with much interest to discover whether this act...gave rise to ceremonies or demanded precautions, giving evidence of more of less conscious superstitious ideas. But I have seen absolutely nothing that could be interpreted in this sense." This admission of the Danish ethnographer, surprising though it is, shows the difficulties that the explorer of Sarakatsani life must overcome at every turn.

[574] 777 221 Moreover, during the shearing, it is necessary to avoid the visit of any person who brings ill luck. (40) As for the seasonal migration, it must

40. On the influence of a visitor on destiny see pp. 289-290, footnote 31.

not begin on Tuesday, Friday or Sunday. (41)

41. See above, the notes on the days indicated for conception and the comments about them, pp. 283-285.

The Well-Being of Men and of Animals

784 776 [574] [789] All the magic procedures examined thus far certainly contribute to the well-being of men and animals. However, men and animals are exposed to threats from different sources: supernatural beings, illnesses, malevolent human acts and influences (evil eye, black magic)--so many sub-topics which will be set forth in this section.

* * * *

776 The realm of feared spirits is filled with demons, fairies, moires, and finally ogres. Each of these has its characteristics and exerts a particular influence which determines the specific manner in which one should defend oneself against its activity.

Demons belong to several categories. Certain ones, of whom the